

understand the importance of protecting our fragile oceans.

While the crew of the Ocean Watch successfully completed their voyage, their work has only just begun. After both the Exxon Valdez and the disaster in the Gulf, I'm not sure how many more wake-up calls we need, but I do know that we're going to need people like Mark Schrader and his crew to help educate us on what is happening to our oceans. I commend the crew of the Ocean Watch for moving us forward on this difficult path.

I recently read a quote by a British man named Thomas Fuller in 1732. He said, "We never know the worth of water until the well is dry." I sincerely hope that with advocates like the crew of the Ocean Watch, we will prove Mr. Fuller wrong.

□ 1620

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces that the correct tally on roll call vote No. 440 was 303 yeas and 119 nays.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Madam Speaker, when we were debating the issue of Afghanistan a couple of weeks ago, during the 3 minutes of time that I had, I brought up the issue of rules of engagement. These are the rules that our men and women in uniform in Afghanistan and Iraq have to follow if they're going to be confronted by the enemy.

Well, I have been very disappointed that we've put so many restrictions on our men and women in uniform that I, along with two other Members of the House—JEFF MILLER, a Congressman from California and DOUG LAMBORN, a Congressman from Colorado—wrote to Chairman IKE SKELTON and Ranking Member BUCK McKEON, and we asked for a classified hearing on this issue of the rules of engagement.

And, Madam Speaker, in the letter that we wrote to the chairman and ranking member, we cited in there an article from The Washington Post that was entitled, "This is not how you fight a war." One example, one of the United States Army officers serving in southern Afghanistan quoted in this article, "Minimizing civilian casualties is a fine goal, but should it be the be-all and end-all of the policy? If we allow soldiers to die in Afghanistan at the hands of a leader who says, 'We're going to protect civilians rather than soldiers,' what's going to happen on the ground? The soldiers are not going to execute the mission to the best of their ability. They won't put their hearts into the mission. That's the kind of atmosphere we're building" in Afghanistan.

Another soldier in the same article was quoted as saying, "This is not how you fight a war, at least not in Kandahar! We've been handcuffed by our chained chain of command."

Madam Speaker, also from that article, I would like to read another paragraph: "For troops on the ground, the directive has lowered their morale and limited their ability to pursue insurgents. They note that Taliban fighters seem to understand the new rules and have taken to sniping at troops from inside homes or retreating inside houses after staging attacks."

This is an ongoing issue and problem for our military. In fact, in a June article, there was a syndicated column by George Will, and I will read just one paragraph. In "a recent email from a noncommissioned officer serving in Afghanistan" . . . "he explains why the rules of engagement for U.S. troops are too prohibitive for coalition forces to achieve sustained tactical successes."

And, Madam Speaker, also during that debate a couple of weeks ago, I held up these two articles from Marine Times, "left to die. They call for help. Negligent Army leadership refuse and abandon them on the battlefield. Four marines and one Army killed" because they did not get the support that they needed because of rules of engagement.

I also have spoken to a father from Maine who was quoted in another Marine Times article, "Caution killed my son. Marine families blast suicidal tactics in Afghanistan." The father said to me—he, himself, a retired marine—that my son and the platoon, if they had gotten the cover that they needed the day before when they saw Taliban soldiers going into a cave—they called for air support. The helo came over the gunship but did not fire into the cave because the pilot said, "We cannot see the enemy," yet the young lieutenant had just reported to them, "We saw the Taliban soldiers go into the cave."

Madam Speaker, it is time to get out of Afghanistan. We have put our troops over there in harm's way, and we're not letting them fight as they should be able to fight.

Before I close, in a poll from CBS just 2 days ago, "Should U.S. Set a Timetable for Withdrawing Troops from Afghanistan?" 54 percent said "yes," 41 percent said "no," and 5 percent were undecided.

Madam Speaker, I want to close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. God, in Your loving arms, hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq. And I will ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God. And I will ask God to give wisdom, strength, and courage to the President of the United States that he will do what is right in the eyes of God. And three times—God, please, God, please, God, please continue to bless America.

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FUDGE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Mrs. KIRKPATRICK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK of Arizona. Madam Speaker, on Sunday, two leading voices from both sides of the aisle outlined as clearly as ever the consequences of Washington's unrestrained spending. The cochairs of the nonpartisan Debt and Deficit Commission, former Republican Senator Alan Simpson and former Clinton administration Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles said that if the government stays on its current path, our crushing Federal debt will "destroy the country from within." Bowles went on to describe it as a "cancer" on our Nation.

These are just the latest warnings of the disaster we face if Congress does not begin making the tough choices to restore fiscal discipline. Washington politicians have heard it from policy experts, from public servants, and, above all, from the people. When will they start to listen? How much plainer can we make the stakes? What more will it take to get the message through?

I was proud to fight for the strongest possible debt commission, and I will push Congress for an up-or-down vote on each of their recommendations. But the cochairs have already laid out what needs to be done to get our fiscal house in order, and this House must not waste any opportunity to take action.

As Members put together the appropriation bills for the next fiscal year, they should work creatively and aggressively to cut spending levels and do more with less. As I have proposed, they should start by reducing congressional pay by 5 percent. Congress needs to lead by example. Before they ask the rest of the Federal Government to make cuts, they must go on to find big and small ways to save billions of taxpayer dollars.

Paying down the debt and balancing the budget will not be easy. There will be politically unpopular decisions to be made. But as Senator Simpson and Mr. Bowles reminded us, leaving the hard calls for another day is no longer an option.

THE MIAMI VA'S CONTINUED PROBLEMS WITH COLONOSCOPIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, over a year ago, more than 3,000 veterans in the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center were notified that they could have been exposed to life-threatening diseases like HIV and hepatitis because the Miami VA was not properly sterilizing its equipment for colonoscopies. These are veterans who went in for routine screenings, who put